

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ricketts: Everyone Has a Role in Preventing Child Abuse

Lincoln – It's important that parents and Nebraska communities have the information and resources they need to care for children to prevent their maltreatment, said Governor Pete Ricketts in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month.

"Everyone has a role in preventing child abuse," Governor Ricketts said. "It's even more critical for communities to recognize ways to strengthen families at risk and prevent child abuse."

"Caring people and organizations in our communities are at the frontline of working with families who might be at risk of abuse or neglect," said Courtney Phillips, CEO of the Department of Health and Human Services. "We recognize the important role they play in strengthening families, and we understand the need to support them in their work as well."

In Nebraska, anyone who suspects child abuse or neglect must report it to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-652-1999, law enforcement or to a local DHHS office. Reporting and preventing child abuse and neglect is everyone's responsibility, including employers, social services, schools and even those who live next door.

A new website launched by the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board at BringUpNebraska.org that provides information for groups in communities to help build and encourage the use of protective factors in families. The information will be helpful to parents, teachers, service providers, businesses, and friends and neighbors.

Key to preventing child abuse and neglect is promoting six protective factors, Phillips said:

- Nurturing and attachment,
- Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development,
- Parental resilience,
- Social connections,
- Concrete supports for parents, and
- Social and emotional developmental well-being.

"Everyone's participation is critical to keeping Nebraska kids safe," said Jennifer Skala, vice president of Community Impact at Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. "Focusing on ways to build and promote the protective factors in every interaction with children and families is the best thing our communities can do to prevent child maltreatment and promote optimal child development."

"When communities construct frameworks to support these protective factors, families and their children experience healthier relationships and children are safer, which is our goal," Governor Ricketts said. "I urge Nebraskans to visit the Bring Up Nebraska website and find out how we all can support children and families and make a difference in their lives."

According to DHHS, the following are warning signs of child abuse or neglect:

- Lack of enough food or clothing or a safe place to live;

- Unexplained or repeated injuries like bruises, welts or cuts;
- Not following a doctor's orders;
- Children left unattended under age six; and
- Lack of supervision to keep a child safe.

When the Hotline is called, the caller is not required to give his or her name, although it's helpful in case more information is needed later.

Numerous events are being held across the state in observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month. In Lincoln, the 2nd Annual Pinwheels for Prevention will be held in Lincoln in the Railyard on Saturday, April 25, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. to promote positive parenting. Family activities, lunch and refreshments, entertainment and educational materials will be provided.

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